

Statement of Thomas Murphy

Montgomery County Council Public Hearing

Tuesday, April 8, 2025, 1:30 PM

Good afternoon, Madam President and members of the Council. I am Tom Murphy and I appreciate the opportunity to be here this afternoon.

My purpose here is to support the County Executive's proposed increase of 3.5 percent in the dedicated property tax levy for our schools, and I am happy to explain why.

I am a 76-year-old retired Federal employee living in Derwood.

You might think I should have a list of reasons to oppose the County Executive's proposal. I'm on a fixed income, I have no children in the MCPS, and with the SALT limitations I can't deduct the tax.

But I support the proposal because I believe the County Executive is correct, and always has been correct, in his perception of the critical role MCPS plays in our community.

I also really believe that in the current political climate in our Nation there is no better or more important time for the Council to show our community's steadfast support for free and independent public education.

Our school system has long proudly been a nationwide model for teaching fundamental values like inclusion, tolerance, respect and the other values most reasonable people associate with building strong, diverse, and respectful communities.

But currently that goal isn't universal in parts of our Nation, and Public education nationwide is under assault, and will remain so for the foreseeable future.

Elements of our society don't like public education in general because they view it as potentially threatening their parochial values. Somehow, they miss the fact that the Golden Rule, the foundation for the values we teach in MCPS, is common to every single religion and theology I've ever studied.

Maryland, and this Council, on different occasions, have lately been an oasis of reason and common sense in resisting the intrusion of parochial limitations. I hope that continues, and will continue with your approval of the County Executive's request.

We need to preserve this County as an oasis of common sense in general, and in education in particular, and that starts by preserving our schools as free and independent in teaching our young people by preserving our ability to fully fund our schools and as necessary protect them from funding related political assaults.

With the political landscape as it appears today, we need to be prepared as a County to defend ourselves if politically motivated outsiders try to force us to change our values by threatening funding for our education programs.

Years ago, in 2000, I met a man named Terry Lierman. He was running for Congress in the 8th District. He inspired me with his emphasis on public education as the foundation of our future.

His remarks at campaign events always focused heavily on education. And the quote I most remember was that "Our children are messengers we send to a future we will never see."

I've told Terry that as a three-time PTSA president years ago I always quoted him, with proper attribution, in trying to build support for PTSA because I could not have asked for a better way to encourage parents and communities to invest in public education.

And I'm here today to say simply that Terry was right then, and he is still right that public education will shape our community's future and must be a priority. And I will be happy to pay the County Executive's proposed supplemental tax if you adopt it.

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